



You are in: [Under Secretary for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs](#) > [Bureau of Public Affairs](#) > [Bureau of Public Affairs: Press Relations Office](#)  
> [Daily Press Briefings](#) > [2004](#) > [Press Briefing Transcripts](#) > [November](#)

## Daily Press Briefing

**Richard Boucher, Spokesman**

Washington, DC

November 3, 2004

### INDEX:

#### SUDAN

- Forcible Relocation of Civilians from Camps in South Darfur
- Concerns About the Safety of Civilians in Darfur
- Efforts Underway to Reach a Peace Agreement
- Continuing Reports of Violence
- U.S. Flights of Equipment & African Troops
- Possible Consequences for Sudanese Government
- Results from U.S. Efforts in Sudan

#### AFGHANISTAN

- Official Announcement of Election Results
- Election of Hamid Karzai to the Presidency

#### HUNGARY

- Three-Month Extension of Troop Mandate in Iraq

#### IRAN

- Visit of U.S. Librarian of Congress Billington
- 25th Anniversary of Seizure of U.S. Embassy in Tehran / Demonstrations
- U.S. Concerns About Iranian Activities
- Query Regarding the Translation of Iranian Books

#### IRAQ

- Military Commitments & Coordination of Troops

## DEPARTMENT

Secretary Powell Serving at the Pleasure of the President

## UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

Query Regarding Attendance of U.S. Official at Funeral of Sheikh Zayed

## JAPAN

Sentence of Sergeant Jenkins for Desertion / U.S. Communications with Japan

## TRANSCRIPT:

(12:38 p.m. EDT)

**MR. BOUCHER:** If I can, I'd like to talk about two things at the beginning, and I'll try to keep it short, give you full written statements afterwards, and then I think, we'll -- well, I'm in your hands. We all know that there are statements at one o'clock we might want to watch, so let's get going.

First of all, I'd like to say something about Sudan and Darfur. The U.S. strongly supports the UN Secretary General in expressing deep concern over ongoing Sudanese Government efforts to forcibly relocate civilians from camps in south Darfur, and also deep concern about the denial of humanitarian access at these camps.

Forcible repatriation is direct contravention of the UN -- United Nations guiding principles on internal displacement and a violation of UN Security Council Resolutions 1556 and 1564, and we call on the Government of Sudan to cease the forcible relocation of civilians, disengage forces surrounding other camps, and allow humanitarian workers immediate access.

We stand with the governments of -- with the international community in holding the Government of Sudan responsible for the violations and we request immediate return of all displaced persons back to the camp at Al Geer where they were moved from. We also look to active involvement of international organizations and the African Union in monitoring the safety of the displaced persons and the withdrawal of government forces.

I would add that we continue to be very concerned about the safety of civilians generally in Darfur. There's been a recent kidnapping of 18 people by Darfur rebels that we find very disturbing. In addition, we've seen the mobilization of thousands of Arab militia in areas of west and south Darfur. Both indicate the parties are not really serious about establishing peace, and we call on all the parties to refrain from the acts of violence, as called for in the April ceasefire agreement.

So I'll stop with that and see if there are any questions on that, and then move on to a brief statement about Afghanistan election.

**QUESTION:** Well, just -- if both -- if you don't think both parties are really serious about reaching an agreement, what hope do you have for there to be any progress?

**MR. BOUCHER:** Well, first of all, there are things that we can do to make them serious, to get them to be more serious. One is the public discussion that we have of these things. Two is the effort that we have underway at the peace talks in Abuja along with the African Union to try to get them to come to agreement. Three is the presence on the ground of African Union monitors that we have expanded through the series of flights that we have conducted, and that we are supporting the deployment of African monitors.

**QUESTION:** Maybe I'm being a bit naïve, but all of what you were just talking about has happened despite those things which you just talked about.

**MR. BOUCHER:** Those are all ongoing things.

**QUESTION:** But they don't seem to have made any difference.

**MR. BOUCHER:** Yet.

**QUESTION:** In fact, the situation, arguably, is worse.

**MR. BOUCHER:** Well, I don't think I would say that. But there are continuing reports of violence, including disturbing reports of violence. We recognize that that remains a serious problem. It's one that we feel it's important to call attention to, and to continue to do things about, and that's what we are doing.

**QUESTION:** Okay. And then just one last thing. You said you're holding the government accountable and then you said we -- I think you said -- correct me if I'm wrong -- we request that they return the people that --

**MR. BOUCHER:** Let people go back to the original camp where they were forced from.

**QUESTION:** That was the word? Request? Because it seems to me if they're in direct contravention, you might want to consider a little stronger --

**MR. BOUCHER:** No, it was -- yeah, request the immediate return of all displaced persons.

**QUESTION:** And you don't want it to be any stronger than that? Actually asking --

**MR. BOUCHER:** We call on them, we ask them, we urge them, we press them for, we are strongly encouraging them to -- I don't know -- whatever words we can use. The point is, these people --

**QUESTION:** Well, as you know, Richard, we all know, better than I, language is very key to diplomacy.

**MR. BOUCHER:** I know. I know.

**QUESTION:** (Inaudible) urge; you don't demand.

**MR. BOUCHER:** We, first of all, we call on them to stop it. Second of all, we call on them to let these people go back to the camps that they came from.

**QUESTION:** Well, and do you think that the Sudanese Government is going to act favorably to your polite request that they get out of direct contravention --

**MR. BOUCHER:** I wouldn't call it a polite request. It's a strong diplomatic urging. We are --

**QUESTION:** It didn't sound that way.

**MR. BOUCHER:** Well, that's what we're doing, in fact.

**QUESTION:** Do we have any A.U. troops being flown in by the U.S.?

**MR. BOUCHER:** In addition to the ones who are already there, so far we've flown in 47 Nigerian and 238 Rwandan troops and more than 118,000 pounds of equipment. It includes meals, vehicles, bags for making sandbags, water, a lot of other equipment like that. So it's an ongoing effort to deploy the African troops there.

**QUESTION:** If I can just ask one quick thing. Have you guys worked out the bank account, issue -- excuse me -- in Washington?

**MR. BOUCHER:** I'll have to check on that.

**QUESTION:** They say that you have.

**MR. BOUCHER:** I'll have to check on that.

**QUESTION:** Richard, what are the consequences for the Sudanese Government for these violations?

**MR. BOUCHER:** Well, they face the continuing pressure and scrutiny of the international community. They face the continuing prospect of further action, further measures being decided by the UN Security Council as we come to the further reports, further deadlines in the UN.

**QUESTION:** What type of measures?

**MR. BOUCHER:** That's for the UN Security Council. Measures as described in Article 41, I think it is.

**QUESTION:** And just on that, the first resolution that the UN Security Council passed on this was in September, correct, early September?

**MR. BOUCHER:** The -- no, there were -- they passed several resolutions.

**QUESTION:** It was in June?

**MR. BOUCHER:** Yeah.

**QUESTION:** So you've had continuing scrutiny and pressure for several months now, it being now early November, which doesn't seem much of anything.

**MR. BOUCHER:** I don't want to sound defensive, but I'd be glad to go through the history of this again with you and to tell you that we have made progress in these months. We have not made as much progress as we would like and we have not seen the kind of action from the government that we have asked for; and yet the people in Darfur, some of them are alive today because of what we've done, and we hope that what we continue to do will help ensure that others can remain alive and not suffer the kind of fate that so many have suffered.

**QUESTION:** Can we move on?

**MR. BOUCHER:** Can I move on?

**QUESTION:** Please.

**MR. BOUCHER:** Okay. Today, November 3rd, the Joint Electoral Management Board in Kabul officially announced the results of October 9th's historic election in Afghanistan. We congratulate President Hamid Karzai on his election as Afghanistan's first democratically elected national leader, and we look forward to his inauguration next month.

We congratulate the Afghan people on turning out in record numbers to choose their country's next head of state, and we congratulate the more than 100,000 Afghan election workers and friends of Afghanistan who helped make this election possible. Everyone involved has much to be proud of. The election is the latest milestone on the Afghan people's road to democratic government and a vibrant civil society. In late spring, they'll take another major step when they return to the polls to select members of the parliament and local governments. The United States and the international community will continue to support them as they work towards this brighter future.

Sir.

**QUESTION:** Can I ask you about Afghanistan?

**QUESTION:** (Inaudible.)

**QUESTION:** Have you decided who's going to represent the U.S. Government as his inauguration?

**MR. BOUCHER:** Not at this point, no.

**QUESTION:** Hungary's involvement in Iran, they're going to -- Iraq, they're pulling out, March. Any reflections on that? Was it a surprise?

**MR. BOUCHER:** Well, my first reflection on that, frankly, is to say -- I take some exception to the way people are reporting the decision that Hungary made to extend its time in Iraq by three months. That's the decision that Hungary made.

**QUESTION:** Okay.

**MR. BOUCHER:** That's what the Iraqi Government requested. Prime Minister Allawi has indicated that Hungary's participation is important, an important contribution. The Iraqi Government requested that they extend their time for a period like this, and the Hungarian Government has proposed an extension to the mandate of their 300-person transportation battalion until March 31st. So that's the news today. And that's good and we welcome that.

**QUESTION:** Would the Iraqi Government and/or the United States prefer that Hungary keep it open beyond three months, and they foreclose that by saying they're leaving? Or is that wrong, too?

**MR. BOUCHER:** I think -- well, we've always said that these military adjustments need to take into account the situation on the ground, need to be based on the situation on the ground, and I'm sure that's something that will remain under discussion as some people arrive and some people go and some people expand and some people cut down. But those things get worked out through military channels. What happened today was the Hungarian Government decided to extend for three months. That's good.

**QUESTION:** So it's not -- it's not a given that they will then depart.

**MR. BOUCHER:** That's something you'll have to ask them. Each country has to decide on their own.

**QUESTION:** The Hungarian Prime Minister is quoted as saying they'll stay until the elections are completed, and an obligation to stay there much longer is an impossibility.

**MR. BOUCHER:** Well, I know that's what he's quoted as saying, and I leave it to them to explain how long they'll stay. We have always felt that the situation on the ground should determine how people stay and how they work, but these things get worked out militarily as the times approach. What we have now is another -- the decision they made today was not to leave at a given point; it was to stay for another three months, as far as we understand it.

Tammy.

**QUESTION:** I had thought that the Iraqi Government actually requested that they stay for another year, not three months. You said "for a period like this."

**MR. BOUCHER:** That's my understanding. I don't -- I'd have to go back and see exactly what they did request.

Yeah.

**QUESTION:** Change of subject?

**MR. BOUCHER:** Yeah.

[QUESTION:](#) Iran -- the Librarian of Congress is in Iran.

**MR. BOUCHER:** Mr. Billington, yes.

**QUESTION:** Yes.

**QUESTION:** Dr. Billington.

**MR. BOUCHER:** Dr. Billington. Excuse me.

**QUESTION:** Do you have any details on the trip and whether it was approved by the State Department or by the government here?

**MR. BOUCHER:** The Librarian of Congress, Dr. Billington, is in Iran. He's there on an exchange program with his Iranian counterpart. He was invited by his Iranian counterpart. We certainly -- the Administration approved the trip and he was briefed in a normal fashion by State Department officers before he went.

**QUESTION:** Why does the Administration need to approve that? Is that a state sponsors of terrorism thing or is it --

**MR. BOUCHER:** I'd have to check on the exact regulations and whether it's required or not. Many times, when people have these opportunities, they check with us and we tell them what we think, if we think it's a good idea or not.

**QUESTION:** And is there, to your mind, any symbolic importance? I mean, because, obviously, U.S. Government employees, which Dr. Billington, I believe, is, don't generally go to Iran. Should one take this as any kind of a sign of an effort to reach out to the Iranians?

**MR. BOUCHER:** I don't want to attach any special importance. There have been various exchanges over time, including humanitarian things like earthquake help and a few years ago there was wrestling teams. So we have had, from time to time, some exchanges with the Iranians. This is another one of them.

**QUESTION:** But, Billington is more than just an employee. He's actually a presidential appointee who's confirmed by the Senate. So I think that there's a little bit more to -- if you could -- no?

**MR. BOUCHER:** I don't know --

**QUESTION:** I'm sorry. The Librarian of Congress, Tom, is appointed --

**MR. BOUCHER:** Let's keep the discussion here. Okay.

**QUESTION:** But, you know, this is -- so there's some relevance to Arshad's question because it's not just as if some, you know, desk-level person --

**MR. BOUCHER:** I understand the question. I'm not, myself, attaching any particular importance to this specific --

**QUESTION:** No, no, no, not that part of the question.

**MR. BOUCHER:** It is --

**QUESTION:** The part of the question about does he require permission to make such a trip.

**MR. BOUCHER:** I will check. I promise to check on that and I will take into account his status as an employee when I do that.

**QUESTION:** And when the Administration was in the process of approving this, was there any consideration given to the fact that this is the 25th anniversary, the week of the storming of the U.S. Embassy in Tehran, and that earlier today, as the Library was confirming this, there were thousands of Iranians chanting, "Death to America," burning the flag outside what was your Embassy where there were hostages held for more than a year?

**MR. BOUCHER:** I don't know. I'll have to check.

**QUESTION:** One other thing on this. If I'm not mistaken, I believe there has been some kind of dispute over whether translators of Persian books can be deemed to be violating U.S. laws. Do you know if this was going to come up on this trip? There was some kind of --

**MR. BOUCHER:** I don't know what the disagreement is.

**QUESTION:** It has to do with there being a state sponsors of terrorism list, and I believe that some scholars had been sanctioned or warned about translating Iranian books.

**MR. BOUCHER:** I really have not heard about that and that's something I'll have to check on. I'm sorry.

**QUESTION:** Would you?

**MR. BOUCHER:** I'll have to check.

**QUESTION:** Can I follow up on that question?

**MR. BOUCHER:** Sure.

**QUESTION:** I mean, are you aware of the thousands of demonstrators in front of the --

**MR. BOUCHER:** We're aware it's the anniversary. I was aware demonstrations were planned. I have not seen reports today from Tehran.

**QUESTION:** Well, I mean, given some of these, you know, comments -- I mean, not only the demonstrators but even earlier this week, I mean, when the Parliament voted to continue its suspending -- not -- to continue its enrichment of uranium, I mean you were hearing from members of the Parliament, "Death to America." I mean is it your opinion that continuing these kind of exchanges is going to stop that kind of mentality?

**MR. BOUCHER:** As I mentioned to you, I don't attach a particular importance to this exchange. I don't think the fact that the Librarian of Congress is going to Iran is going to change Iranian attitudes or behavior. Iranian behavior remains of grave concern to us on many areas, including in the nuclear area, including their support for terrorists, including their violent opposition to the peace process, including their human rights record. Topic after topic, we have serious problems with the Iranian Government.

I don't think any of us think that visits by the Librarian of Congress or some of these other groups that have gone is going to change that behavior overnight or is going to really deal with those serious issues that need to be dealt with; on the other hand, a certain level -- allowing certain exchanges doesn't seem to me totally inconsistent with a prospect that someday Iran might change those areas of behavior that are so important to us.

**QUESTION:** Well, I mean, isn't part of these cultural exchanges an effort to change Iranian attitudes about America over the long term?

**MR. BOUCHER:** I don't really think the Iranians are inviting those gentlemen in order to sit down and discuss their violent opposition to the peace process or their nuclear weapons program.

**QUESTION:** Aside from the debate on the symbolism of the visit, do you know what the purpose of the visit was for, what the invitation was for?

**MR. BOUCHER:** It's supposed to be an exchange with his counterparts to talk about matters involving the Library of Congress and the way they do their business.

Sir.

**QUESTION:** (Inaudible.) I presume that you don't have anything new to say about the EU-3 and -- still waiting?

**MR. BOUCHER:** No, that's in their hands.

One, two, three -- Elise.

**QUESTION:** It's a new topic.

**MR. BOUCHER:** Okay, Sonny.

**QUESTION:** I just wanted to follow up. Can you say anything about the ElBaradei report that's been --

**MR. BOUCHER:** No, I don't think ElBaradei has written or submitted his report at this point. We'll look at when he does.

Yeah, Farah. Same?

**QUESTION:** Can we go back to Hungary for a minute? Is there a concern at the State Department that this is part of a larger trend of European departures from the coalition and that the idea that after the election in Iraq, many of these countries will feel their obligation is over?

**MR. BOUCHER:** Look, the military are going to coordinate these things. Some countries are coming in. I mean, we've seen recent arrivals in Iraq from some countries. The Koreans, I think, have recently been -- put more people in. The Japanese. There are a number of countries that have stepped up, there are a number of countries going down; this is a matter of military coordination.

As far as predicting what's going to happen six months from now, I think we'll be able to do that when we get much closer towards the time. Obviously, many countries wanted to make sure they did stay through the election and that's what, in fact, we're seeing now. We've seen a number of countries announce that they were going to stay through the election. We think that's important. That corresponds to the wishes of the Iraqi Government. After the election, you know, whether things calm down and how the security situation evolves, we'll just have to see then, and at that point the coalition and the Iraqis will be able to make the appropriate decisions about arrivals and departures.

**QUESTION:** Isn't the U.S. position that the coalition should stay together until long after the election? Are you guys pushing for people to stay till the end of 2005?

**MR. BOUCHER:** It's the U.S. position that we need to continue to work these things in military channels so that the Iraqis have the kind of support they need and deserve at any given moment, and that as the Iraqis build up their forces and as we all deal together with the Iraqis with the insurgency, that the coalition forces will be able to draw down. But exactly when that can happen will depend on the events on the ground. So what the events on the ground will be after the election, we'll just have to see. It's too early now to start predicting, you know, a mass exodus or departure. You may have some leaving and some arriving.

I think -- same?

**QUESTION:** More or less the same question. Has the Secretary thought about staying on through the Iraqi election? (Laughter.)

**MR. BOUCHER:** That's not more or less the same question, and the answer is that he serves at the pleasure of the President.

Elise.

**QUESTION:** Is the State Department or the Administration sending anyone to the -- did they send anyone to the funeral of Sheikh Zayed?

**MR. BOUCHER:** I'll have to check and see.

**QUESTION:** Real short one. Do you have any comment on the South Korean state-owned company's plans to open a liaison office in North Korea?

**MR. BOUCHER:** No, not at this point.

**QUESTION:** And tangentially to that, Mr. Jenkins was sentenced to a whopping 30 days in prison for his deserting to North Korea in the middle of a war, which is not technically over yet. I'm wondering if the State Department was involved in any negotiations with the Japanese or was it -- served as a liaison between the Pentagon and the Japanese officials over this, what would appear to be a rather light sentence.

**MR. BOUCHER:** The plea bargain, or the arrangement that was worked out, I understand was a legal one and you'll have to check with the courts on that, the military courts.

**QUESTION:** Was the State Department involved at all?

**MR. BOUCHER:** We certainly have been involved in this matter as a liaison. We have talked to the Japanese. But as far as the sentencing goes, that's a matter for the courts to explain.

**QUESTION:** Well, I understand that. But the Japanese had expressed concern about -- or had expressed their desire to see a lenient -- Mr. Jenkins be treated leniently, and by, I think, pretty much all accounts, this is quite lenient.

**MR. BOUCHER:** I think they made that -- the Japanese made that known in various ways. But what factors the court took into account in reaching this verdict and the sentence, you'll have to ask the court.

**QUESTION:** I'm not asking about the sentence -- I'm asking if the State Department was involved in talking with the Japanese Government about -- and coordinating with the Pentagon about how this case was dealt with, regardless of what the sentence was.

**MR. BOUCHER:** The State Department was certainly in touch with the Japanese, in touch with the Pentagon, about this case, period. How they dealt with the case was a matter that the courts decided. What factors they took into account, whether they took Japanese statements into account, Mr. Jenkins' statements or anything else that we did or anybody else did, you'll have to check with them.

**QUESTION:** Yeah, but I'm not -- I'm trying to ask if the State Department conveyed to the Pentagon Japanese requests that he be treated leniently.

**MR. BOUCHER:** I believe the Japanese request was made known in various ways, and I don't know them all.

**QUESTION:** All right. And then I'd also like to ask on another case. Presumably, you're all in favor of this, but, you know, Bobby Fischer, who is a chess player whose sole crime appears to have been going to Yugoslavia and winning some -- winning a chess match and taking some of Milosevic's money, you guys want him deported, you've taken away his passport, and I'm just wondering what, you know, what this says. You look at these two cases, both of which involve Japan, and I realize you're going to tell me that they're totally separate cases, and they are, but does it strike you as odd at all that someone who deserts from the Army in the middle of a war is being treated with less -- or with more kid gloves than someone who is a nonviolent chess player?

**MR. BOUCHER:** Look, neither of these cases is in my hands or in the State Department's hands or anything. It's a matter of judicial authorities; in one case military justice, in another case the Department of Justice. You can check with those people and find if anything strikes them as odd. But in our case, in terms of the State Department, these are not two areas that we are directly responsible for and we're not the people that are supposed to try to explain them or compare or contrast or take any of your notions and assumptions.

**QUESTION:** Thank you.

**MR. BOUCHER:** Thank you.

(The briefing was concluded at 1:00 p.m.)

**DPB #180**



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